**Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak** edited by E. Soepadmo and K.M. Wong, jointly published by the Sabah Forestry Department, Forest Research Institute Malaysia and the Sarawak Forestry Department. Vol 1 (1995) Ll + 513 pp, Vol 2 (1996) x + 443 pp.

The Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak is an ambitious project, some might even say 'mission impossible'. The aim is to produce a flora of the trees, woody plants of at least 5 m tall and 10 cm dbh, of the two Bornean states of Malaysia. This, it is estimated, will be enough to fill eight volumes, each covering some 300-400 species; and, what is more, it is proposed to complete the whole undertaking in ten years.

Two volumes have been published so far, and they are simply magnificent. It is always possible to find something to criticise, and I will indulge in the reviewer's liberty to nitpick below, but in general the first two volumes of the flora are excellent in every department. The quality of production is outstanding, the standard of the taxonomic treatments excellent, the drawings wonderful.

The first volume starts with three introductory chapters. These are: an overview of the background to the Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak Project by Professor E. Soepadmo, a brief history of plant collecting and floristic accounts of Borneo by Dr Wong Khoon Meng, and an essay on the biogeography and ecology of northern Borneo by Professor Peter Ashton. There follow accounts of 31 families (Acer., Alangi., Anisophylle., Araucari., Bignoni., Burser., Cappar., Celastr., Chrysoblan., Clethr., Connar., Corn., Datisc., Goodeni., Hyperic., Illici., Jugland., Monimi., Nyss., Ochn., Olac., Oxalid., Pittospor., Rhamn., Rhizophor., Rut., Simaroub., Sonnerati., Staphyle., Styr. & Trigoni.). Volume Two includes 23 families (Anacardi., Boragin., Caprifoli., Casuarin., Chloranth., Crypteroni., Ctenolophon., Daphniphyll., Epacrid., Erythroxyl., Ixonanth., Lee., Logani., Lythr., Malv., Myric., Nyctagin., Santal., Sapind., Scyphostegi., Tetramerist., Ulm. & Winter.). The accounts are contributed by many authors, including the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and many junior staff members of Malaysian Herbaria. The project workhorse is clearly Mr K.M. Kochummen who has provided the treatments of most of the larger families included thus far. The family accounts include a key to all genera occurring in Sabah and Sarawak, followed by more detailed entries for genera that include trees, with full keys and species descriptions of arborescent taxa. This is a proper flora and not merely a manual for foresters, so major synonyms and typification are given, but the inclusion of one plate for each genus containing trees, the use of not-overly-technical language and strict adherence to alphabetical arrangement of taxa will help to make the flora more accessible to readers who are not taxonomists.

The preparatory work for the flora has led to the discovery of many new species, 39 in volume two alone. Also Wong and Sugau, in their treatment of the Loganiaceae employ a much narrower species concept in *Fagraea* than Leenhouts (1962) did in his account for Flora Malesiana. In a precursory paper, Wong and Sugau (1996) have divided Leenhouts's *Fagraea fragrans, F. ceilanica* and *F. elliptica* and *F. racemosa* into many elements. The relative susceptibility of taxonomists to see discontinuity or intergradation will frequently lead to different treatments of groups exhibiting complex variation like *Fagraea.* Users of the *Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak* will have the opportunity to test whether Wong and Sugau's species are justified.

My only major complaint about the flora is the frequent omission of any discussion about the taxonomy employed. In the introduction it is stated that Brummit (1993) is the main guide to familial and generic circumscription, yet the two volumes contain instances where Brummit has not been followed e.g. the maintenance of the Sonneratiaceae and the Hypericaceae, the inclusion of *Irvingia* and *Ailanthus* in the Simaroubaceae, and the recognition of *Neckera* and *Roureopsis,* all of which I felt warranted more discussion. Similarly the use of *Scaevola sericea* over *Scaevola taccada* needed reference to the literature on this major nomenclatural controversy. I believe the correct name for *Scleropyrum wallichianum is Scleropyrum pentandrum* (Dennst.) Mabb. (Mabberley 1977) and that William Theobold made the combination *Ceriops decandra* well before Ding Hou (Mabberley 1985) .

These are minor quibbles. The Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak is excellent and should be included in any library (personal or institutional) which purports to cover the flora of Southeast Asia. The team that has produced the two volumes deserves hearty congratulations for what has been achieved, and encouragement to face the challenges ahead.

## References

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